Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently amended): A method for forming individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers comprising the steps of:

applying an effective amount of a crosslinking agent in the presence of an effective amount of a polyol to a mat of cellulosic fibers,

separating the mat into substantially individualized fibers, drying the treated individualized fibers,

curing the crosslinking agent in the presence of the polyol to form individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers,

wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 160° C to about 215 ° C ; and

wherein the Whiteness Index, ($WI_{(CDM-L)}$), of the individualized intrafiber crosslinked cellulosic fibers is greater than about 69.0.

2. (Original): The method of Claim 1 wherein the crosslinking agent is an α-hydroxy polycarboxlic acid.

3. (Original): The method of Claim 2 wherein the crosslinking agent is selected from the group consisting of malic acid, tartaric acid, citric acid, tartronic acid, α-hydroxyglutaric acid, and citramalic acid and mixtures thereof.

4. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is citric acid.

5. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 3 wherein the crosslinking agent is malic acid.

6. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is selected from the group consisting of acyclic polyols, alicyclic polyols and heterosides and mixtures thereof.

7. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the acyclic polyol is selected from the group consisting of erythritol, xylitol, arabinitol, ribitol, sorbitol, mannitol, perseitol, and volemitol and mixtures thereof.

8. (Previously presented): The method of claim 7 wherein the acyclic polyol is sorbitol.

9. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the alicyclic polyol is myo-Inositol.

10. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 6 wherein the heteroside is selected from the group consisting of isomalt, lactitol, and maltitol or mixtures thereof.

11. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 10 wherein the heteroside is maltitol.

12 (Previously presented): The method of claim 10 wherein the heteroside is lactitol.

13. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the cellulose mat before the application of the crosslinking agent.

14. (Previously presented): The method of Claim 1 wherein the polyol is applied to the crosslink treated individualized fibers before curing.

15 (New): The method of Claim 1 wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 170°C to about 215°C.

16. (New): The method of Claim 1 wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 182°C to about 215°C.

17. (New): The method of Claim 1 wherein said curing occurs at a temperature from about 193°C to about 215°C.